

Corruption in Education System in Chetan Bhagat's *Revolution 2020, Love, Ambition, Corruption*

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Abstract: *Chetan Bhagat, one of the most popular Indo-Anglican authors, is a prominent columnist and renowned orator. Adorned with many awards Bhagat enjoys a reputed position in various fields of art and literature and he focuses on youth's career through their ambition and passion. This paper innovates ambitions of parents, the passions of youths and especially the corruption in education system. Revolution 2020 is the story of three friends of different classes. Ambition of Gopal's father - to see his son an engineer - ruins him barely but Gopal's passion is different. He comes in the contact of a politician and opens a technical institute, beginning with corruption. Raghav, from middle class family, cracks the IIT entrance but his passion is to be a press reporter. He succeeds to achieve his goal but he has to pay a big cost for his revolution due to the corrupt system. Finally the paper exposes how the corruption has captured the whole education system from top to bottom. The novel enunciates corruption for which the energetic and gentle youths fall a prey – a major problem of the modern century.*

Keywords: *Ambition, Passion, Corruption, Education system, Revolution, Goal, Prey.*

Chetan Bhagat, one of the most popular Indo Anglican authors, is known as “the biggest selling English language novelist in India’s history”¹. He, a prominent columnist and a renowned speaker, writes columns for English and Hindi newspapers- *The Guardian, The Times of India*, and *Dainik Bhaskar* focusing on youth career through their ambition and passion and some burning issues based on national development. Adorned with ‘Society Young Achiever’s Award’ in 2004 and ‘Publisher’s Recognition Award’ in 2005, Bhagat enjoys a well reputed position in various fields and has achieved a permanent place in the hearts of his readers. From time to time he has been getting appraisal from various and prominent magazines i.e. Time magazine named him as “one of the 100 Most Influential People in the world”² and Fast Company UNN listed him as “one of the world’s 100 most creative people in business”³. A R Rahman states in TIME magazine, “Many writers are successful at expressing what’s in their hearts or articulating a particular point of view. Chetan Bhagat’s books do both and more.”⁴

Born on April 22, 1974 Chetan Bhagat is the son of an army officer. His mother is a government employee in agriculture department. And brought up in a middle class Punjabi family in New Delhi, he was married with Anusha Suryanarayan whom he met in IIM Ahmadabad. He completed his schooling from Army Public School Daula Kuan, New Delhi during 1978-1991. For higher studies he went to Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT-D) (1991-1995) where he opted his stream as Mechanical Engineering. Then he completed his MBA (Master of Business Administrative) from an illustrious institute Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmadabad. After an eminent career Chetan Bhagat chose for a lucrative professional in banking. As an investment banker he had worked in Hong Kong for 11 years and finally shifted in Mumbai to pursue his passion for writing. It is his passion for writing that made him reach to the crest of popularity.

Chetan Bhagat is the author of six blockbuster novels- *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the call center* (2005), *Three Mistakes of my Life* (2008), *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009), *Revolution 2020 Love, Corruption, Ambition* (2011), and *What Young India Wants* (2012). The first three novels were written during his tenure as an investment banker. An

inclination towards the fictional world led him to *Five Point Someone*, a novel based on his own experiences at IIT, and the rest is a stuff of legends. The love story of Anusha, (his wife) and Chetan Bhagat was the inspiration for his fourth novel *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*.

Revolution 2020 is the story of three friends from Varanasi. The life story is predictably a love story or rather a love triangle involving Gopal and childhood friends Raghav and Arti. The three protagonists belong to different classes. Gopal is poor, Raghav is middle class while Arti is well off. The novel is just a love story as while speaking to India Real Time (IRT) Bhagat himself states, "But, frankly, when you read the book you see it's not so political. It's still 80% love story and the rest is about the issues I am talking about. 'Revolution 2020' is something that is very close to my heart..."⁵ But if you focus on the background, activities, and all other minor aspects, you will find that the story starts from corruption though it seems to be a joke or students' hobby. Stealing and eating the cake of Arti shows the intention of both Gopal and Raghav. Gopal wants to eat whole while Raghav says, "Don't take the whole thing. It's not fair.... Cut it into two. Take one, leave the other."(R 9-10) They commit a mistake to leave the chocolate stained ruler on the seat by which they are caught. This is the practice in all corruption and illegal matters in which the convict leaves some sign. This episode resembles with Shukla's episode where he is caught and punished like Gopal.

Though opening new educational institutes indicates to spread education and reduce corruption but even the thought of starting such institutes is not without corruption. The motive of the capitalists, represented philanthropic and charitable towards the society and career of students, focuses on only lucre and stinginess. Chetan Bhagat, being a capitalist warns the society not to be fully corrupt especially in the field of education. Talking to India Real Time (IRT) he says,

"I saw corruption at almost every level. While I am a capitalist at heart and I have no problems with commercialization as such, I believe that while it's okay if education becomes a profitable business, it's not okay if it becomes corrupt. You can make money...everybody makes money, but the moment you enter into a corrupt mindset, it has dangerous consequences – especially in education. If you have corruption in education, you end up with a whole generation that is not trained properly."⁶

The Ganga Tech, represented as one of the biggest institutions and predictably to be a well reputed university, is founded on corruption and disputed land. The land on which it is situated is usurped forcefully and illegally from Ghanshyam, Gopal's uncle, though it is a justification to him. Here everyone waits for his opportunity. Not only the capitalists but the professionals are also second to none to cash their chance. In the initial procedure to establish the Ganga Tech they had to grease the different palms at every step.

Chetan Bhagat has always been very cautious and aware with most of the issues related to the society. That's why he always represents him through the articles published in the newspapers. Bhagat writes in his article, "Many of us unfortunate enough to be educated and emotionally invested in our country are in pain these days. We see our nation being plundered and mismanaged by the politicians in power."⁷

Undoubtedly the increasing number of private institutes is giving a good opportunity to those students who fail to get admission in IITs or government colleges. The students can earn a degree of their choice through these colleges. Of course this private sector is playing a good role in educating the students but they fail to maintain the quality education. In this reference Bhagat writes in his article 'The Bootlegging of Education',

"Thousands have opened up in the last decade. In NCR alone, there are over a hundred MBA colleges now. With such proliferation quality standards vary widely across these institutes. While there is demand for them given our large student pool, what they are teaching and what students are learning is another matter. To ensure quality, the government has put in place procedures like elaborate approval processes and regular inspections. However, these are abused and corruption is rife. Many private college owners have personally admitted to me that they had to pay bribes at every stage of opening the college- from getting land and building approvals, to approving the course plan and to set fee structures. Corruption in the private education sector is such a norm that nobody in the know even raises an eyebrow anymore."⁸

Gopal is completely novice about the system, but the brokers are available everywhere. Bedi knows the whole system and how to settle matters. To establish the institute files are just copied and pasted as he himself says, "It is standard stuff, taken from earlier applications." (R 137) Initially they had to bribe to VNN (Varanasi Nagar Nigam) to get permission for construction.

Babus are also exposed to be very expert in taking bribe and in bargaining. Sinha, the deputy-corporator in VNN takes a huge amount only for the approval to open the college. In this bargaining Gopal asks Sinha, "No concession for Shukla ji?" Sinha says, "This is already half of what I take." Gopal says "Eleven?"... Then Sinha aptly says, "Twelve and a half. Done! Do not embarrass me before my big brother." (R 140) The corrupt people have two faces. In spite of allured for money they want to show them dead honest. Sometimes these people opt the worst methods of giving bribe. When the bulldozer comes for demolition, Shukla ji advises Gopal, "...Put the notes in an empty cement bag, topped up with sand...His colleagues should not see it. He has a solid reputation." (R 193)

Fraudulence of Gopal's mind crosses all the barriers when he convinces Arti by saying "I'll print you a degree if you want, you do not even to attend classes." (R 148). It is not only one Gopal in *Revolution 2020* but so many Gopals are there in every society who corrupt the system and discourage the diligent students and encourages the frauds.

Generally we anticipate changes from others not from us. We cannot gestate the revolution or a great change in the society until and unless we change our mind because "...the revolution begins at home. Society changes only when individual family norms are challenged." (R 149) All these changes are possible by the inner urge not by imposing forcibly. Now-a-days the people especially the parents do not understand the passions and ambition of their youngsters. They try to obtrude their will on them as in case of Gopal his father wants to see him as an engineer. That's why he forces him for the preparation of AIEEE or JEE and sends him to Kota for coaching while Gopal is not interested. He simply wants a degree from Varanasi and wishes to earn money as only earning money is his passion. But Arti clarifies here, "That's not passion. That's ambition." (R 150) Gopal's father is the representative of most of the fathers of today.

Revolution 2020 also suggests that revolution is possible only by our own efforts and inner urge. Firm determination, honesty towards ourselves, dedication for work, and persuasion in the right direction can lead to desired destination and we can do many impossible works. But we have to pay the price for everything as Raghav has to pay a big cost for his revolution. It is his passion to write for media that he rejects the best opportunity offered by Infosys and works as a reporter in *Dainik*, a well reputed paper. He has to suffer many times severely. He is expelled from the *Dainik* office due to a corrupt conspiracy. Later on he establishes his own small press but it is also ruined. He pays this cost only for being fair and in the trial to make the society fair. But due to his firm determination he does not lose heart. In this reference Mr Barack Obama, the present president of USA, quotes, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."⁹ In another quote he emphasizes on inner consciousness, passion and firm will power, "Yes, we can. Yes, we can change. Yes, we can."¹⁰

Teachers are thought greater and more important than everyone in our society. Kabirdas, a famous Hindi poet and social reformer, mentions the teacher greater even than the God but now the system, from top to bottom, has corrupted each and all. All the people, professionals or capitalists, concerned with the education system focus on the money only and forget their moral duty. In the very beginning Prof M C Srivastava is appointed as a dean of the new established college. After an apt and open bargaining he was settled for a one lakh cash seventy thousand cheque package per month. Immediately he offered to help them hire other faculty, for salary ranging from thirty to eighty thousand a month depending on experience and the degrees they possessed and very cunningly says, "I'll charge ten thousand per hire as search fee, apart from my salary...I will come to campus three days a week...I am the dean, that is why three days. Else, once a week is enough." (R 157) Now the strategy for admission is planned. Everything, mentioned in the novel, is very practical in context of present scenario of education system. New appointed dean Srivastava suggests Gopal, "Did you fix the principals?" (R 158) Though Gopal is amateur with this system but he is receptive and quick to espy the situation. He asks Bedi if they will have to bribe the principals. At this Bedi utters, "Yes. But never say that word, especially to school

principals. Anyway, it is a straightforward calculation. We give them ten percent of the fee we take for every admission.” (R 159)

Corruption has changed the motive of the posts also. Higher posts are the symbol of dignity, reputation and responsibilities or capabilities but now-a-days people acquire them not because of dignity but for the income purpose. Here the posts are not achieved; they are bought only to earn money not to show the capability. Bedi tells Gopal about the UGC and AICTE inspectors, “University lecturers from government colleges are appointed as inspectors. Of course, since it is such a lucrative job, the lecturers have to pay bribe to become one.”(R 138)

AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) inspection means the true inspections of the infrastructure and the system whether it is able to provide education to the students or not. They really focus on the shortcomings of the system not for the improvement or upliftment of education system but to increase the amount of the bribe and the management tries to attract their attention towards papers, breakfast or lunch and distracts their focus from the drawbacks. When the inspector asks, “How many lathe machines are there in your machining lab?” (R 165) and wishes to inspect them manually, Srivastava, the dean perturbs his mind by saying, “Eight... we will take a round later... why walk around in the heat?” (R 165) When Bhansali, a member of inspection team, asks about the qualifications of Gopal, he answers perplexingly, “I have built this college... I have hired the best faculty.” (R 165) and Srivastava interrupts and escorts them out. After the lunch they are given envelopes the real fulfillment for approval. When Srivastava asks Gopal about the amount of money provided to them, Gopal says, “Two for Yadav, and twenty five each for the rest,” (R 166) Even then Srivastava enforces, “Make it fifty for Bhansali” (R 166) only to get the approval soon.

If you talk corporate, they will talk about a serious shortage of talent. On the other hand students say that there are not good jobs. Obviously the students are not being trained properly to meet the demands of the globalised world. Almost everybody agrees to this fact that there is something missing in the system. One side is not responsible for this corruption. The management wants to earn money without fulfilling the basic requirements of the institute and the officials or the concerned persons take the benefit of the situation. Mostly the leaders or the capitalists are more responsible for this critical situation of corruption. Shukla ji, the MLA and trustee of the college, tells Gopal, “If we had a straightforward and clean system, these professors will open their own colleges. Blue chip companies and software firms could open colleges. The system is twisted; they don’t want to touch it. That is where we come in.” (R 166)

Government’s no profit allowed policy for private institutes is one of the biggest reasons of corruption. These private institutes are restricted by government and technically they cannot make money. The government presumes that there are innumerable people who are ready to invest a huge amount of money in setting up good college but this is a flawed and stupid assumption that they will spend this money for no profit. Apart, the corrupted leaders or the capitalists turn their black money into white in this process and through the ingenious methods like fake payments to the contractors and over inflating expenses they get a return on their investment. This is why “Ex-academics, world class corporate and honest people will never touch private education, for they do not want to pay bribes at every stage and devise shady methods to bypass no profit rules.”¹¹

The headlines of *Revolution 2020* also invoke the people and the matter he writes attacks on corruption directly or indirectly by exposing the inappropriate approvals and illegal construction “Farms are turned into colleges...Colleges will soon have malls next door. Politicians mean to protect us and prevent all this, are often the culprits...We have proof to compare the vast difference between what is allowable and what VNN approved...” (R 190-191) Gopal does not understand the passion and motive of Raghav and interprets wrongly. That’s why he thinks that “He is taking revenge.” (R 191) Another article ‘Because Enough is Enough’ of *Revolution 2020* focuses on the reality of the society including corruption and its solution,

“...top leaders are the biggest crooks?...where almost anyone with power is corrupt? India has suffered enough. Why?...Does an Indian farmer not work hard? Does an Indian student not study? Do we not want to do well? Why, why are we then doomed to be poor?...We have to clean the system...‘Power is not an apple that falls from a tree into your lap. Power has to be snatched from people who already have it.’ We have to start a revolution, a revolution that

resets our corrupted system. A system that shifts power back into the hands of the people, and treats politicians like workers, not kings.” (R 205)

Thus corruption in education system might be the worst curse for the people of any nation. It is the education which can make or mar the future of the whole country. *Revolution 2020*, very practical to the present scenario, exposes all the loop holes of our modern education system. If the same system continues longer, the huge number of youth will be unemployed. Undoubtedly these institutes will provide the students the best degrees which will prove all in vain. Bhagat also advises his readers as well as the government,

“I have nothing against commercialization of education. Commerce and business are a good thing. However, when it comes to education, it needs a sense of ethics and quality. Good people must be incentivized to open colleges. Say, by a simple policy fix like allowing private institutes to make a profit. This would mean companies like Infosys and Reliance might open colleges, perhaps on a large scale, as shareholders will approve the huge investment required. If these companies open colleges at least they will be of a certain standard. Competition can ensure that the ability to make profits never turns into greed. But if the business model is sustainable, many good players would be attracted to this sector.”¹²

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